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## NPS Hosts Naval Research Working Group 2017

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*U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Michael Ehrlich*

### **NPS Hosts Naval Research Working Group 2017**

*By MC2 Michael Ehrlich*

Modeling, Virtual Environments, and Simulation (MOVES) Institute Faculty Associate Erik Johnson discusses a virtual drone swarm simulator as the Naval Research Working Group (NRWG) 2017 event kicks off on campus with a series of lab tours, April 18. The NRWG is an annual event where DOD research sponsors and NPS faculty discuss thesis and research opportunities for NPS students, faculty and staff.

NPS Dean of Research Dr. Jeff Paduan has seen the impact of the NRWG in creating opportunities for the DOD to better utilize NPS, while university students get to tackle the DOD's most critical issues.

"The NRWG is the annual event for the NPS Naval Research Program (NRP). It is a critical step in the program timeline because it brings topic sponsors from many operational Navy and Marine Corps offices to campus to meet with NPS faculty and students," said Paduan.

"NRP itself is a unique program because it provides funding for operational studies and thesis topics," he continued. "The operational topic sponsors associated with the program are not the same sponsors that support basic research projects, such as the Office of Naval Research. Because of this, NRP compliments the broader NPS research portfolio.

"NRWG kicks off the process of creating and prioritizing projects for the following year. At the end of that process, results from the funded studies feed directly back to the operational Navy and

Marine Corps. The entire process serves to educate NPS faculty about operational problems, provide relevant thesis topics for NPS students, and provide critical solutions to a range of topic sponsors," Paduan added.

MOVES Faculty Associate Perry McDowell agreed, seeing the impact the NRWG has had on his own research field of Live, Virtual and Constructive (LVC) simulation.

"MOVES has a lot of good ideas on how we can help the fleet, and the fleet has a lot of problems that need to be solved," said McDowell. "NRWG brings a lot of people together to accomplish both. Sometimes the fleet doesn't have the money to solve its problems and by providing the funding, it gives a huge return on investment for the DON."

The simulation that Johnson and McDowell presented during the first day of the event resembles a video game, where multiple players are equipped with an array of tools to accomplish a mission. The difference this simulation has to a typical video game is the tools are being designed to resemble the actual capabilities of small drones. The operators are also given realistic controls, mirroring how an operator would utilize these tools in the field.

"A lot of the components of the gaming industry are moving into military training," said McDowell. "For most simulations, you are going to put a few people into it and still require lots of people supporting the training of those one or two people. Now a six-year-old can put a video game into an Xbox and play it without any problems, and I think the DOD is moving towards that simplicity."

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